Harriman Gets Aide In Viet Peace Probe

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Chester L. Cooper, a White House specialist on Vietnam and Communist China until last April, has returned to the Johnson Administration to concentrate on peace-probing in the Vietnamese conflict.

The State Department announced yesterday that Cooper is at work as special assistant to roving Ambassador W. Averell Harriman. Harriman has been assigned by President Johnson, as the announcement put it, "to explore all prospects for a peaceful settlement of the war in Vietnam."

Cooper served on the National Security Council staff when it was headed by McGeorge Bundy. In his post as principal assistant on Asian Affairs, Cooper was engaged in confidential diplomatic efforts to open channels of communication with North Vietnam on subjects ranging from the treatment of prisoners of war to attempts to produce negotiations about the war.

For 17 years previously, Cooper worked for the Central Intelligence Agency. He was also a member of the U.S. delegation to the Geneva Conference in 1954 that ended the French Indochina war in what is now North and South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

When Cooper left the White House staff in April, he joined the Institute for Defense Analyses here under a Ford Foundation grant, with plans to do research and writing during a year's leave of absence. The State Department said Cooper agreed to "interrupt his sabbatical" in order to work with Ambassador Harriman.

Harriman is presently awaiting word from Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia on whether a planned visit by Harriman to Cambodia is on or off as a result of a new fracas with the United States over the bombing of a village near the Cambodian-South Vietnamese border.